1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

50. The apportionment of virgin land is decided at a general palaver in which all of the senior male members (*tuai bilek*) of the families of the long-house participate. But before this is held most *bilek* families have taken some measure of independent action. As soon as the sowing of one year's crop has been completed, a *bilek* family begins to plan the whereabouts of its farm of the following season, and general farming arrangements are premeditated by about two or three years. On my arrival at Rumah Nyala in 1949, for example, the people announced to me that they intended to take two more crops from the area in which they were then farming, and then return to secondary jungle in the main valley of the Sut; and this in fact is what they did. The process of selecting virgin forest for felling is not, however, highly organized, but rather unplanned and casual, with each *bilek* family acting largely on its own initiative. As already explained, it is usual for a small group of *bilek* families to operate in the same immediate area. After sufficient consultation to ensure that the plans of others are not being wilfully contravened, a *bilek* family declares its intention of farming a certain area, by setting up on it a sign, or *pesindang*, which consists of a notched stick and a cross-piece.

At the same time a small area surrounding this *pesindang* is cleared of undergrowth. Once this has been achieved, every opportunity is taken to acquaint all the other members of the community with what has been done. Where possible the matter is brought up on some semi-formal occasion—such as after a *bedara*, or minor ritual offering, when most of the senior members of the community are assembled on the *ruai* of the long-house. In this way the arrangement receives public recognition. Instances of conflict are rare. Often there is a certain amount of 'jockeying' for position, but once a *bilek* family has established its *pesindang* at the foot of a spur, there is little chance of this fait accompli being abrogated; and thereafter, tenure is governed by the principles already enunciated. Thus several months before a new year's farming begins, the intentions of most of the *bilek* families of the community are generally known.

51. There is however, one occasion in particular for the public discussion of questions of land tenure. This is following the *matak ka burong* ritual (which usually falls sometime in May), when the augur (*tuai burong*) of the community distributes to all *bilek* families desiring them, omen sticks (*kayu burong*), to be used during the initial stages of the new agricultural cycle. As soon as this important ritual has been concluded, a discussion of precise plans for the coming year breaks out. The arrangements of most families are firmly settled by this time, but there are commonly several who have not reached a final decision. In particular, this is the time when requests for the use of another family's secondary jungle (*damun*) are made. All secondary jungle is privately owned by different families, but in most communities there is a certain amount of 'borrowing' and inter-change of *damun*. Thus a family may, for various reasons, want to remain for another year in an area in which its own holdings of secondary jungle are not quite adequate to its needs; in these circumstances, the usual course is to request (*minta*) the temporary use of an adjoining strip of *damun* belonging to someone else. Usually such requests are granted, but there is no change of tenure, only the taking of one season's crop. Reciprocity is the principle governing these transactions; and occasionally a simple inter-change of *damun* is arranged by two *bilek* families. It does sometimes happen however, that rent (*tase damun*) is charged for the usufruct of secondary jungle. But this is a rare occurrence; during my two years in the Baleh, I did not encounter a single instance of rent being paid for *damun*, and according to Iban informants, it

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

243 342 critical ripening period and the early stages of the harvest, someone is always present to keep watch over the *padi* (Plate 15). At Rumah Nyala in 1949-50, there were 12 *bilek* families with substantial *langkau umai*, suitable for semi-permanent residence, while 14 others had less pretentious huts, which were only slept in during periods of special vigilance.

243 789 127. The months of November and December, when weeding is taking place, cover critical stages in the growth of the young *padi*. According to Iban notions, the *padi* plant is liable to become afflicted with a range of various illnesses (*tabin*), and they apply to these the same terms used to describe certain human ailments. Green smut, for example, which attacks and destroys single kernals, substituting for them large sclerotial masses of its own, is equated with warts (*butir*). Again, *padi* is often described as suffering from a cold (*renga*) or a headache (*pedra*). While the young *padi* is forming a careful watch is kept over the farm, and if any disease makes itself evident, rituals are at once performed. The general purpose of these rituals (*memali umai*) is to restore the ailing *padi* to health. If the trouble be serious, a clump of *padi pun* is taken to the long-house, placed in a shrine (*ranyai*), and the gods summoned to succour and treat it. It is then carried back to the farm to be re-planted, where prayers are uttered (cf. Para. 61), and magical potions scattered over the rest of the growing *padi*. At the same time magical rites directed at driving away insect and animal pests are widely performed.

Traps, and Other Protective Devices

243 [417] 128. During the period of weeding the men begin to turn to the devising of other measures for the protection of their crops. A common stratagem is the building of a strong palisade of stakes bordering those parts of the farm judged to be especially prone to attack by deer and pigs. Others wait until the panicles have emerged and then clear a lane, five or six yards in width, along the main farm boundaries. The theory is that animals are wary of exposing themselves by crossing this circumvallation, and that if they do take the risk there is a good chance of their being seen and chased away. Traps are also widely used, there being three main types:

243 224

(*a*) the *peti*, a spear-trap for pigs,
(*b*) the *bubong*, a large box-trap for monkeys,
(*c*) the *tinya*, a spring-pole trap for smaller animals.

Most popular of all is the *peti*. It consists of an upturned, forked sapling, one limb of which is embedded firmly in the ground, while the other, to which an extremely sharp, fire-hardened, bamboo spear is fastened, is held back at high tension, leaving a narrow space (about 24"—26") just wide enough to permit the passage of a pig; across this space is suspended a fine fibre, which when displaced by a few inches trips a trigger, and releases the spear (Plate 13). The setting of a *peti* involves very careful measurement, for it is so designed that the spear will strike the pig (*babi:* Sus barbatus) in its most vital part. These *peti* are scattered along the edge of a farm, and especially in those places where pig tracks have been detected. Because of the danger to wandering humans, warning signs [203] (consisting of a cross-stick in a notched upright) are usually erected, but it is always necessary to move with caution when approaching an Iban farm, by other than the main paths. Not infrequently mock traps and signs are also erected, further to alarm and confuse the pigs. The *bubong* is a large box-shaped trap, built of stout poles or logs, and baited with cucumbers, pawpaws and the like; dislodgement of the bait trips the trigger and causes a heavy lid to fall, cutting

727 Any amount of ceremony is used before these
796 images, and it is safe to say that they are idols in
778 the strictest sense of the word. The craftsmen who make them vie with one another in their production each man endeavouring to put the finest possible workmanship into his carving, as the eyes of the whole country will be on his work as it stands on the top of it's lofty pole. The Dyaks believe that the images of the birds will peck out the eyes of their enemy and disconcert them, this being the reason why the images are made and the whole object of
727 the feast. Every night musical instruments are
796 played and a particular drum-beat called *pepat* is
202 sounded in order to acquaint the Dyak world with
533 the fact that the great feast is about to take place. Dyaks to the number of twenty or thirty sit around in a circle beating the drums their arms rising and falling in unison keeping beautiful time, and the proper beating of these drums is quite an art in itself.

727 The women prepare their finest costumes and the
796 jewellery which they always wear on such occasions
535 in order to fascinate the onlookers. Then they form up in a long procession in single file holding gaudy little plates of yellow rice and paddy, and with the best dancer present in full war dress and armed with sword and shield dancing at their head to the accompaniment of the beating of drums and sounding of musical instruments, the long line of women move slowly up the house sprinkling paddy and yellow rice on the assembled guests, the dancer attacking and fencing with an imaginary enemy the grace and agility displayed in his movements being a sight quite worth witnessing.

000 On the second day of the feast the poles with the

844 When the time of delivery is come and while she is in travail, two or three midwives are called to her assistance to accelerate the birth of the child. Nature is not allowed to pursue its own course but force is applied.

[202] As soon as the child makes its appearance into the world, a signal is given by beating a bamboo receptacle with a stick, or a brass gong is struck, or may be a gun is fired to announce that a child is born in the house. Immediately follows a religious ceremony a fowl being waved over the heads of all present, including the infant and its mother. The fowl is then killed and the blood is smeared on the foreheads of those present.

After the mother and the child are washed and dressed, the afterbirth is deposited in a plaited bag and hung on a tree either in their cemetery or in their *tembawai* the site of their former house. The [834] infant is sprinkled with a compound of *pinang* (betelnut) and *lawang* (zedoary) is bandaged and made to lie on the spathe of an areca palm, a cloth is put round it, and a Dyak sheet hung over it. One of the women who assisted at the birth washes the child and cuts the umbilical cord. She is afterwards rewarded with a *parang*, an *entadu* plate, and a long piece of the black *tinu* (black split rotan worn round the waist). The mother is seated with her back against a blazing fire, she drinks freely of ginger-tea to facilitate her discharge.

852 As soon as the umbilical cord has dropped off, the infant, for the first time, is taken to the bathing-place. The man who carries the child takes a fowl with him. As soon as they come to the bathing-place the fowl is killed and a wing is cut off. If it be a male child this wing is tied on with a piece of red thread to a spear, and if the child be of the other sex this wing is tied on to an implement used by Dyak women in weaving *(leletan)*. On the fourth

[p. 85]

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 OC6 Iban OC6

his people wish to put off mourning, or that his people have been slain and he must have some revenge, and he ends by inviting all present to accompany him on an incursion upon an ancient enemy. If he be a chief of any real influence he is sure to secure an ample following, in reality more than enough for his purposes, but his ambition expands as his numbers increase and his warpath assumes grander proportions. The women lend their assistance to induce their husbands and lovers to join the warpath. Before this, however, the chief whose mind is set on the business gets together a circle of chiefs and warriors, which before the end of the proceedings resolves itself into a council of war. The expediency of the campaign and the exigences which demand it are then openly debated, and if the majority or even a strong party are in favour of it, the chief who originally broached the topic, if he feels confident of a following large enough to effect his purpose, announces his intention of becoming a leader and the date of the departure for the enemy's country. All present are invited to accompany him and to bring their friends and relations. The details are then discussed, the amount of *bekals* (baskets) necessary, the route, the character and number of enemy, etc. The period usually selected for any expedition on a large scale is that immediately after the seed planting or after the harvest; the former time is preferred when available as they can spare the time better, and have three months clear before they are required to gather in the harvest. In the latter case they would probably have no farms at all for that year, as they would have no dry weather to dry the clearings, which, therefore, would not burn well.

As the time draws near for the expedition to start, a spear is sent round the country from village to village with a *tembubu toli*, to signify how many days are to elapse before the commander-in-chief is able to make a start; a place is also mentioned where he will await the force. The women are everywhere busy preparing the *bekals*, and the produce of the gardens are taken to the nearest market to exchange for tobacco, *chunan*, *gambir*, etc. The men on their part have been busy in getting the war boats ready, launching them into the river, lashing on the planks and fitting them up with palm leaf awnings and bamboo floorings. Those who are able to purchase the material, plane the bottom of their canoes to make them smooth and tar them to preserve them, make figure heads for the bows, and paint the side planks in various patterns. They take nets with them to fish by the way, and dogs to hunt with if the distance is so great that they are likely to run short of food, but their chief support on an expedition of this kind is what they find on the banks and in the forest—especially the

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

721 proof of his valour in the eyes of his lady-love. Among the crowd who listened to him there were sure to be many who were willing to follow him on the war-path. The women would help him by urging their husbands, or lovers, or brothers, to go. Out of the crowd of eager followers the Chief would choose a certain number to form a Council of War. These would discuss the whole matter, and it would be decided when the party was to start for the enemy's country. Details would also be discussed—how much food each man was to take with him, by what route they were to go. The time of the year generally chosen would be just after the planting season, because that would give the men a clear three months before the harvest. The weeding of the paddy-fields between the planting season and the harvest is work that is usually done by the women.

[202] The next thing to do would be to send the War Spear round to the neighbouring villages, to let all know when the expedition was to take place, and where it was to start from. A man would bring this spear to a long Dyak house, deliver his message, and return, leaving the spear to be carried on by one of the men in that house to the next village, and so on. At once the men in the house would get their war-boats ready. They would begin making figure-heads for the bows of their boats, and paint the side planks in various patterns. They would furbish up their arms, and sharpen their weapons, and decorate their helmets and war-jackets. The Dyaks 721 554 generally wear their best when going out to fight. I asked a Dyak once why this was done, because, as I pointed out to him, most of the finery they put on interfered with the free action of their limbs. His answer was that if they were well dressed, in case of their death,

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

the enemy who saw the bodies would know that they were not slaves, but free men of some standing.

In the present day, under the rule of Rajah Brooke, no Sea Dyaks may go out on a fighting expedition unless called out for that purpose by the Government. I remember not long ago that there were some rebels in the upper reaches of the Batang Lupar River, who had been guilty of many murders, and would not submit to the Government. After trying milder measures without any effect, it was decided to take a force into their country, and the Government sent round the War Spear to let the people of the different villages know they were to be ready to go on expedition at a certain date. I happened to be in a Dyak village in the Krian. It was evening, and I was seated on a mat in the open veranda of the house, and round me were seated a crowd of men and women, whom I was trying to teach. A man arrived at the house with a spear decorated with red cloth. At first no one noticed him. He spoke to a man near the top of the ladder of the house. The man came up to the middle of the house, where I was seated, and said something which I did not quite catch. At once the whole crowd got up and left me. They listened eagerly to what the man who brought the spear had to say. I was not left long in doubt of what it all meant. The message the man brought was short and to the point: "You are to be ready with your war-boats, and be at Simanggang at the next full moon. There is to be an expedition up the river."

It is difficult for me to describe the change that came over the crowd. The headman of the house at once asked a youth to carry on the spear to the next house with the same message. The men at once discussed the question of war-boats, and it was decided there and then

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Lintong made preparations to attack (nyerang) and take the heads (ngayau) of the men in the recently built (1862) Fort Brooke in Sibu. He sent out the bungai jarau[33] to his followers who built utap (the one-way canoes) with which they descended the Kanowit and Rajang and attacked Sibu.

Taking up the account as told by the Ranee Margaret, Lintong led a fleet of boats, "manned by some three thousand men," and attacked the fort which was manned by Harry Skelton and thirteen Sikhs.[34] Two or three Iban "chiefs" and the son of Sir Hugh Low, then Colonial Secretary of Labuan, were also in the fort. After firing a barrage of poisoned arrows and barbed bamboo spears and receiving in return fire from the defenders' muskets, the Iban withdrew. During the fighting, the Iban "chiefs" in the fort

> "did nothing but peer through the lattice-work and shout Dyak insults at the attacking party, most of whom they knew very well. They made unpleasant remarks about the enemy's mothers, and inquired whether the men themselves belonged to the female sex, as their efforts were so feeble, etc."

According to a local informant's account,[35] Lintong withdrew up the Kanowit, adamant in his resistance to the Rajah. Slyly letting it

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[33] A section of balsam or other softwood cut (jarau) to resemble a flower (bungai) and sent out by a raja berani or war-leader to assemble his followers to fight.

[34] Indian Sepoys who were exiled for taking part in the Indian uprising of 1857.

[35] Tuai Rumah Ampan

000 (Iban dilemo) for powering the electric supply.

591 Although the individual may acquire personal property for himself,
621 he is expected to contribute to the common property of the bilik of which
421 he is a member. And, in this comes a source of conflict that not in-
578 frequently results in partition. One member may feel that he or his
[202] family is contributing more than another. Resentments smoulder and issue forth in gossip about the other party, who overhears or is told of the gossip.[8] Insults are inferred and added to real injuries, arising from the strain and drain on psychic energies of more or less constant contact (selalu bepeda', always in sight, is the Iban expression with meaning near to "familiarity breeds contempt"). In the end, the individual or family
[787] comes to the decision that no longer can they tolerate the situation. The decision may be articulated in a dream, impelling the individual or family to move. Or, it may be expressed through conversation, in which the parties concerned seek the best solution to their conflict. Not infrequently, the decision to remove is reached in the heat of anger, and the individual or family will leave being scarcely on speaking terms with those who stay.

591 Upi ak Paran (Bilik No. 14) of Rumah Nyala moved his family out of
621 his natal bilik, after he remarried following the death of Sunta, his first
587 wife. Sunta was the sister of Pengarah Chundi (Bilik No. 15), both children

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[8] Gossip among the Iban, as with all people, is a viable means of indirectly releasing hostilities. The Iban dislike direct confrontations, such encounters being banned under positive and negative sanctions and reinforced with supernatural taboos (penti penali).